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PROGRAMME MATTERS REQUIRING POLICY GUIDANCE FROM THE COUNCIL

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

Strengthening three main units within the Office of the Environment Programme by establishment of Programme Activity Centre (PACs)

Summary

This document, an addendum to document UNEP/GC.16/21, presents one more subject in the series of programme matters that require policy guidance from the Council. In this document the Executive Director is seeking the approval of the Council to establish three new programme activity centres in the Office of the Environmment Programme: (i) the Global Resource Information Database Programme Activity Centre (GRID-PAC); (ii) the Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre (IAE-PAC) and (iii) the Environmental Law and Institutions Programme Activity Centre (ELI-PAC).

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A. The Global Resource Information Data Base (GRID)

1. By its decision 13/1, the Governing Council welcomed the initiative of the Executive Director in establishing a two-year pilot phases of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID), and invited Governments to support it financially or through contributions in kind.

2. The mission of GRID was defined as providing timely and reliable information and access to a unique international data management service for addressing environmental issues at global, regional and national levels to help bridge the gap between scientific understanding of planetary processes and sound management of the environment.

3. Since 1985, with some two-thirds of its support provided from public and private sources, GRID has made significant progress towards becoming a major global information system, serving the world community by supplying environmental data, by providing geographic information system (GIS) technology support in practical problem-solving, and by supporting technology transfer, training and capability-building. Examples of practical outcomes in three areas are:

- The African elephant database developed by co-operating experts within GRID which provided the basis for catalyzing world action in changing the elephant's status in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), leading to a ban on the ivory trade;

- A joint project with the FAO Fisheries Division, which used GIS technology and remote sensing and led to the optimum siting by the Costa Rican Fisheries Department of aquaculture enterprises in the Gulf of Nicoya;

- Through technology transfer and training with UNITAR, with support from the Swiss Government and the IBM Co-oporation, a dozen new GRID-compatible national centres were set up in Africa (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania).

4. There are now two GRID centres with direct UNEP funding: GRID-Geneva, covering the European theatre and global databases, and GRID-Nairobi, dealing with regional datasets and extension into the Third World. There are two self-funded GRID centres: GRID-Arendal in Norway and GRID-Sioux Falls in the United States of America. There is also a growing family of GRID-compatible sub-regional centres catalyzed with UNEP money but largely supported by donors, for example, in Bangkok (Southeast Asia), in Noumea (the South Pacific region), and in Kathmandu (the Himalayas).

5. GRID is rapidly evolving into being a significant programme sector, functioning between the processes of environmental data collection (i.e., GEMS, Earthwatch) and various sectoral elements of Environmental Management (soils, water, oceans, etc). Moreover, GRID is now large enough to consume a significant portion of the resources of its parent body, the GEMS Programme Activity Centre. If GRID is to serve effectively as a bridge between

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environmental assessment and management, it would be best located institutionally, as well as conceptually in an autonomous position between the two functional clusters of the Programme, that is, as an independent programme activity centre. This would provide GRID with the flexibility to serve effectively all elements of the Programme, as well as external agencies and Governments.

B. Industry and Environment Office

6. The Industry and Environment Office (IEO) was established by UNEP in 1975 to bring together Governments, industry and non-governmental organizations to foster environmentally sound industrial development. The IEO is located in Paris.

7. To this end, since 1975, IEO has been engaged in the following activities:

- Promoting the development and use of safer and cleaner technologies, as well as of environment management tools;
- Stimulating the exchange of information and experience through gathering case studies and publishing various technical reports, as well as the Industry and Environment Review;
- Promoting awareness and interaction between the decision-makers in industry and government by organizing seminars, workshops, and training activities.

8. In 1984, the World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM) was jointly organized by UNEP and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Since that date, IEO has followed the recommendations adopted at the Conference.

9. IEO is also responsible for programmes related to transportation, tourism and the working environment. However, insufficent resources have prevented IEO from developing significant activities in these fields, especially the first two.

10. During the last two years, in accordance with Governing Council decisions GC.15/37 and GC.15/39, IEO has focused its work on two priority activities:

- Establishment and operation of a network of industries and organizations dedicated to "Cleaner Production". In the framework of this activity, industrial sectoral working groups have been established, a newsletter published, and a computerized information exchange system is being established (ICPIC);
- Development of the Awareness and Preparedness of Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme to prevent industrial accidents and reduce their impact on the environment.

11. In addition, to fulfill its tasks, IEO has maintained and expanded its query-response service, its bibliographic database on industry and environment issues, its industry outreach activity and the publication of technical reports and of the Industry and Environment Review.

12. Additionally, IEO has initiated and promoted activities in many regions and countries. For example, APELL activities are currently going on in Bahrain, Brazil, China, Mexico, Philippines and Tunisia. Training workshops on Hazardous Waste Management have also been held in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia, and Latin America.

13. IEO has been working continuously in co-operation with the United Nations agencies dealing with these issues, in particular with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD), the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. For example, letters of understanding have been signed with UNDRO and with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), WHO and UNIDO in the field of technological accidents; others are in preparation, in particular with UNCSTD on Cleaner Production. Technical reports are jointly prepared (for example, on tannery and the environment with UNIDO, on mining and the environment with ILO, and on wood preservation with FAO). Thus IEO is clearly becoming a policy-setting and co-ordinating body for the United Nations organizations that deal with industry, technology and environment issues.

14. IEO's work has been closely associated with other international governmental organizations, and in particular the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Economic Community (EEC).

15. IEO has also created a platform bringing together the various entities most deeply concerned: government, environmental groups, industry (associations such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA), and the International Council of Chemical Manufacturers, as well as individual companies). For example, the APELL and Cleaner Production programmes involve all the above groups, clearly demonstrating a partnership that allows sharing of experience and contributes to the transfer of environmentally sound technologies.

16. IEO activities are related to most UNEP concentration areas: climate, ozone depletion, hazardous waste and toxic chemicals, ocean and coastal areas, etc. The policy orientations on industry and environment issues provided by IEO, as well as the information on cleaner and safer technologies, is needed to help implement regional programmes such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) or the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) programme recently approved by the LAC environment ministers.

17. At its second special session, in its decision SS.II/9, Section IX, the UNEP Governing Council recognized the role played by IEO in the field of transfer of environmentally sound technology and, in its decision SS.II/4, Section B, paragraph 4, requested the "Executive Director to strengthen the activities of the Industry and Environment Office related to the development of clean technologies in the field of hazardous wastes". The establishment of IEO as a Programme Activity Centre would give it the autonomy required to carry out all these tasks with maximum efficiency.

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C. Environmental Law and Institutions

18. UNEP's mandate to assist in the development of environmental law at both the global and national levels was clearly spelt out in at least eight of the recommendations contained in the Stockholm Plan of Action, as well as in the Stockholm Declaration itself. This mandate has been reaffirmed by the Governing Council over the years. In its decision 10/21, the Governing Council endorsed the conclusions of the Senior Government Officials experts in Environmental Law and adopted the Montevideo Programme. At the same time, the Executive Director was requested by the Governing Council "to take, in consultation with Governments and international organizations concerned, all appropriate steps for the early implementation of the specific recommendations for initial action" and called upon "Governments and international organizations ... to co-operate in and support the implementation of the programme". Pursuant to this mandate, the Environmental Law and Institutions Unit of UNEP (ELIU) has succeeded in developing non-binding principles and guidelines on various subjects, including Shared Natural Resources, Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources, Environmental Impact Assessment, Exchange of Information in International Trade in Potentially Harmful Chemicals. These non-binding guidelines developed by various Ad Hoc Working Groups of Legal and Technical Experts established by UNEP have been used by Governments to develop national legislation and regulations. In some cases, the guidelines provided the basis for enacting new legislation on subjects hitherto not covered by any national laws.

19. Concerning binding international legal instruments on the environment, a number of major international agreements, including the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal have been developed under the auspices of UNEP. In addition to developing these international agreements, ELIU has also helped to administer various conventions. Currently, UNEP is hosting the secretariat for the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, the Basel Convention, CITES and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Secretariat services are all provided by UNEP or its Executive Director, according to the specific requirements of the Parties.

20. ELIU is currently servicing the negotiations of a global treaty on the protection of biodiversity and is reviewing the advisability of transforming the guidelines on trade in toxic chemicals into an international convention.

21. The ELIU plays a major role in assisting developing countries, through training and technical assistance, to develop their own national legislation, establish or strengthen their national environmental machinery and accede to and implement international agreements or principles and guidelines on the environment. At the regional level the ELIU is now the central unit in the Office of the Environment Programme developing regional treaties dealing with regional seas.

22. Because the work of ELIU (a) cuts across a large number of budget lines; (b) deals with several units within the Office of the Environment Programme including OCA/PAC, IRPTC, IEO, Water; and (c) deals with a large number of international organizations and departments of the United Nations including its Legal Department, FAO, WMO, IAEA, IMO, as well as such bodies as the International Union for Nature and the Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN), it is essential that this Unit enjoy a large high degree of flexibility and

autonomy if it is to discharge all its responsibilities at the maximum level of efficiency. Consequently, the Executive Director recommends that ELIU be set up as a Programme Activity Centre.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

Recall its decision 13/1 section II, part 2, paragraph 1 of 23 May 1985, in which it welcomed the initiative of the Executive Director in establishing a two-year pilot phase of the Global Resource Information Database (GRID),

Recall its decision SS.II/4, Section B, paragraph 4 of 3 August 1990, in which it requested the Executive Director to strengthen the activities of the Industry and Environment Office related to the development of clean technologies in the field of hazardous wastes,

Note with satisfaction that the Industry and Environment Office has, for a number of years, played an important role to promote environmentally sound industrial development, particularly through technology and information exchange, thus contributing to the implementation of decisions 15/37 on the promotion of the transfer of environmental protection technology and 15/39 on industrial accidents of 25 May 1989,

Note the progress made in the implementation of decision 10/21, in which the Council endorsed the Montevideo Programme, and of subsequent decisions in the field of environmental law,

Recognize that, in view of rapidly changing perceptions and emerging environmental needs, the effective implementation of the GRID, industry and law sub-programmes call for a more autonomous, sharply focused and flexible approach.

1. Decide to give the Global Resources Information Database, the Industry and Environment Office and the Environmental Law and Institutions Unit a greater degree of autonomy in fulfilling their functions by establishing them as Programme Activity Centres within the Office of the Environment Programme with the following priorities and long-term goals:

A. Global Resource Information Database (GRID)

(i) Environment management support

Priorities: Producing packages of options that are feasible for use by policy-makers in taking their decisions in respect of resource use and sustainable management of the environment within the context of development plans; providing an international forum for data collectors and information users to match data to needs;

Long-term goal: A fully-integrated and functioning United Nations based core GRID system of co-operating agency and national centres, openly exchanging environmental data and information and providing the necessary information management support to bridge the gap between the generation and the use of environmental data.

(ii) Environmental data management

Priorities: Acquisition, verification and dissemination of geo-referenced environmental datasets, as well as the development of methodologies for handling global and regional data;

Long-term Goal: All major existing global and regional environmental databases to be more effectively available through the GRID network in appropriate forms to a wide range of users, from students to scientists to politicians.

(iii) Agency support

Priorities: Providing access to GIS systems and expertise for supporting environmental assessments and practical environmental problem-solving at all levels;

Long-term Goal: All United Nations specialized agencies and most major intergovernmental organizations having access to GRID data and technology for the description, understanding and solution of environment-related problems.

(iv) Technology transfer

Priorities: Formal GIS and remote sensing training programmes in on-the-job case study applications and in conjunction with technical assistance programmes to strengthen national capabilities of developing countries in particular;

Long-term Goal: Providing access to GRID data technology to all countries in the world and providing most with functioning GRID-compatible monitoring and assessment centres for national environmental assessment and management.

B. Industry and Environment Office

(i) Promotion of the environmentally sound management of selected industrial sectors

Priority: To maintain a consultative process with industry and prepare and disseminate technical guidelines in a number of industrial sectors, including tourism, transportation and the working environment;

Long-term goal: To review the environmental implications of all industry sectors and the impact of improved technologies on the enhancement of the state of the environment, particularly with respect to air and water pollution.

(ii) Promotion of the cleaner production network

Priority: To establish and operate a network of industries and organizations dedicated to "Cleaner Production" through industrial sectoral working groups, a newsletter and a computerized information exchange system;

Long-term goal: To strengthen national capabilities for managing industrial development to avoid adverse environmental impacts.

(iii) Prevention of industrial accidents

Priority: Development of the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme to prevent industrial accidents and reduce their impact on the environment.

Long-term goal: Improved emergency response and prevention of industrial accidents.

(iv) Technical support to developing countries

Priority: Operation of a query-response service, establishment of database on industry and environment issues, training workshops on environmentally sound technologies (low-waste and no waste) and on hazardous wastes management;

Long-term goal: To strengthen national policies and capabilities for managing industrial development in an environmentally sound way.

C. Environmental Law and Institutions

(i) Promotion and implementation of global legal environmental instruments

Priority: To assist countries with the development, adoption and implementation of international legal instruments, including conventions and protocols, as well as principles and guidelines, with regard to the control or prevention of specific environmental problems;

Long-term goal: A coherent body of international law in the environmental field.

(ii) Formulation and implementation of national environmental legislation and establishment or support of appropriate institutions

Priority: To assist developing countries, through training, the provision of technical assistance for attending meetings, enacting national environmental legislation and setting up environmental machineries. This includes assessment of problems preventing developing countries from becoming parties to or implementing environmental legislation;

Long-term goal: National environmental laws adopted and institutions established in developing countries.

(iii) Information exchange

Priority: To collect and disseminate information on national environmental legislation and maintain a Register of International Treaties and Other Agreements in the Field of Environment; to strengthen and co-ordinate the use of existing information sources and databases;

Long-term Goal: An operational comprehensive database on national and international environmental law.

2. Request the Executive Director to accelerate the development of the Industry and Environment Office and its network to help ensure a free and open global exchange of environmentally sound technologies between East and West and North and South;

3. Call upon Governments and international organizations concerned to co-operate and support the development and application of international environmental law, assistance to developing countries through the provision of technical assistance to develop national environmental legislation, institutional building, and support of education and information programmes regarding environmental law;

4. Call upon the United Nations organizations and bodies and intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations System, as well as non-governmental organizations active in the field of environmental law to fully co-operate with the United Nations Environment Programme in the implementation of its programme;

5. Request the Executive Director to report on the progress of work under the new PACs at the next regular session of the Council.